# Building A Conservation Strategy For The Yukon

**A PUBLIC DISCUSSION PAPER**

YUKON
CONSERVATION
STRATEGY
For Our Common Future

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Prepared by the
Public Working Group on the Yukon Conservation Strategy
and the
Department of Renewable Resources
Government of Yukon

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*The Yukon's environment and natural resources are its treasure. The mountains, forests, lakes, and rivers hold the promise of a prosperous future. But it's a promise with strings attached. The treasure must be used wisely, so it lasts into the future.*

Yukon Economic Strategy
1988

*The 'environment' is where we all live; and 'development' is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode. The two are inseparable.*

Gro Harlem Brundtland
World Commission on Environment & Development
1987

*We must enable the earth to renew itself. We must aim to improve the material, intellectual and spiritual circumstances of peoples. And we must nurture the values which enhance human possibilities. Our ancients believed in the unity of all living things, and even of life and non-life. We must rediscover this sense of identity with and responsibility for fellow humans, other species and future generations.*

Indira Gandhi
Introduction to the World Conservation Strategy
1984

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# INTRODUCTION

Conservation and development are often seen as two separate activities in conflict with one another. But is this a realistic view? Increasingly the interdependence of development and conservation is being recognized. They are not two separate activities, but two inseparable parts of one process.

Development depends on a supply of raw materials — be it timber, clean water, fertile soil or wildlife — to generate economic prosperity. We need the economic well-being that comes from development. But we also need a healthy environment in which to pursue our lives.

The challenge we face is to sustain development through the conservation of our resources and the natural systems that support them. This is the key to healthy and productive lives for ourselves and future generations.

Yukoners have expressed the need for sustainable use of resources and sustainable development in a series of public forums in recent years. In 1984 the Task Force on Northern Conservation, which included mining and oil and gas interests, government, and the environmental community, recommended a northern resource conservation policy, involving the integrated use and management of our resources.

The Select Committee on Renewable Resources, which held hearings in 17 communities in 1986, called for measures to protect and enhance our wildlife populations and their habitats. It recommended improved management of our fisheries and forests and an agricultural policy that emphasized land conservation.

Participants in the Yukon 2000 planning process have spoken of the need for economic development that does not deplete our renewable resources and allows for more stable growth from our non-renewable resources. They also stressed the importance of protecting the Yukon's natural environment and its cultural and heritage resources.

The Yukon Economic Strategy has emerged from Yukon 2000. Within the context of this strategy, there is need for a plan for the development of our natural resources, a plan that outlines how we derive economic benefits from these resources while ensuring their wise and sustained use. This is the function of a Yukon Conservation Strategy.

A Yukon Conservation Strategy is a plan for Yukoners and by Yukoners. But increasingly we are aware that we do not live in isolation. Issues, such as the anti-fur lobby, acid rain, and water shortages, make this clear. A Yukon Conservation Strategy will reinforce national and international efforts to encourage the sustainable use of the world's resources and the protection of the global environment.

The World Conservation Strategy, released in 1980 and endorsed by more than forty countries, has promoted the development of national and regional conservation strategies to address the resource management and economic development at a more local level. In Canada, the National Task Force on Environment and Economy, on which the Yukon has a member, has called for provincial and territorial conservation strategies as a means of encouraging sustainable development in this country.

In responding to these national and international initiatives, a Yukon Conservation Strategy must always reflect the needs and values of the people

of the territory. The views expressed in the reports of the Task Force on Northern Conservation, the Select Committee on Renewable Resources, and Yukon 2000, thus, form a starting point for the development of a conservation strategy in the Yukon.

To ensure the early involvement of Yukoners in the development of a conservation strategy, a Public Working Group, composed of individuals and organizations representing a cross-section of Yukon interests, is working with the Department of Renewable Resources on this project. In the past several months, the Public Working Group has explored several initial elements of a conservation strategy. The purpose of this discussion paper is to present these and to promote public discussion about them.

The components of this discussion paper are:

(1) **definitions** of conservation and a Yukon Conservation Strategy

(2) the **purpose** of the conservation strategy

(3) the **principles** that will guide its development

(4) the **objectives** to be met from a conservation strategy

(5) some **suggested actions**

Additional information is also presented on how a conservation strategy will be developed in the Yukon.

# DEFINITIONS

## WHAT IS CONSERVATION?

There has been a tendency in the past to define conservation as solely preservation. This is too narrow a definition. It is true that conservation can include the full protection of unique areas or critical habitat areas for wildlife. But it has an active sense, too. It means the use and management of resources for development projects, for recreation, and for other consumptive and non-consumptive purposes.

This broader meaning of "conservation" is recognized in the definition below:

**Conservation is the careful use, protection and management of our natural and human heritage.**

## WHAT IS A CONSERVATION STRATEGY?

The term "conservation strategy" has become more familiar in the years since 1980 when the World Conservation Strategy recommended that these strategies be developed by nations and regions of the world as a means of achieving the sustainable use of resources. But it is not yet a household word.

**A conservation strategy is a comprehensive plan for the management of our natural and human heritage.**

It is based firmly on the principle that we should conserve, harvest, and develop our natural resources wisely to ensure an environmentally sound economy now and in the future.

Many aspects of our culture and heritage are bound up in our natural environment and resources. A conservation strategy also addresses the need to protect and enhance the cultural and heritage resources of the territory.

A conservation strategy can serve different functions. It can be a blueprint that will guide our progress towards sustainable development. It can also be a checklist to measure our success or to judge future development activities. A conservation strategy is built on the assumption that different resource uses — forestry, trapping, hunting, mining and oil and gas development — can take place in a compatible fashion. It is a signal of cooperation, not conflict.

These various elements of the term "conservation strategy" have been captured in the definition developed for the Yukon Conservation Strategy:

**The Yukon Conservation Strategy is a policy framework that influences decision makers in all aspects of the Yukon economy to act in recognition that both life and sustained economic prosperity depend on the natural environment and on the wise use of natural resources.**

# PURPOSE

## WHY DEVELOP A CONSERVATION STRATEGY?

The fundamental purpose of a Yukon Conservation Strategy is to promote and sustain the economic well-being of the Yukon and its residents through the wise use and management of its natural resources and the protection of the natural environment.

This purpose can, however, support others. These, too, are reasons for developing a conservation strategy.

- The conservation of renewable resources to ensure sustained use can promote community and regional development. A voice in the development of renewable resource policies and management practices can promote the development of communities and regions.

- The maintenance of traditional cultures and lifestyles depends on a sure supply of the resources on which these cultures and lifestyles are based. A conservation strategy can support traditional uses, values and needs.

- The natural environment has shaped the culture and heritage of the Yukon. The cultural and heritage resources can be included in systems designed to protect the territory's living resources.

- Tl.e transfer of additional responsibilities to the Yukon government and the settlement of the aboriginal land claim will encourage the integrated management of both renewable and non-renewable resources in the territory. A conservation strategy can clarify the issues and decisions needed to promote constitutional development.

- There are issues that transcend the boundaries of the Yukon, just as there are species that migrate beyond our borders. The conservation strategy can help provide a voice for the Yukon in national, circumpolar, and international matters.

# PRINCIPLES

## WHAT WILL GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONSERVATION STRATEGY?

The development of the Yukon Conservation Strategy will be guided by the following principles:

**The Yukon's natural resources, renewable and non-renewable, and its cultural and heritage resources are to be addressed in the Yukon Conservation Strategy.**

This principle establishes the scope of the conservation strategy. It is acknowledged that non-renewable resources are by definition finite and therefore not sustainable; the Yukon Conservation Strategy is, however, to address the long-term management of all natural resources with a view to achieving the greatest sustainable benefits from resource uses. This principle also acknowledges the Yukon's rich cultural heritage and the need for the careful use, protection, and management of our cultural and heritage resources. A corollary to this principle is that both consumptive and non-consumptive uses of these resources are to be addressed in the conservation strategy.

**The ideas and knowledge that both the aboriginal and non-native cultures have about the conservation of resources are to be recognized in the Yukon Conservation Strategy.**

The two distinct cultures in the Yukon sometimes bring different viewpoints to resource management. The conservation strategy needs to encourage greater understanding and acceptance of these differences and to allow for input from both cultures in the use, management, and protection of the territory's resources.

**Economic and environmental management go hand in hand.**

This principle recognizes the fundamental notion that the economy and the environment depend on each other and, thus, need to be managed in an integrated fashion.

**Essential ecological processes and life-support systems will be maintained. The genetic diversity of plants and animals and habitat diversity will be preserved.**

Essential ecological processes are processes governed or supported by ecosystems, such as regeneration and the recycling of nutrients, that are essential for food production, health and other aspects of human survival and sustainable development. Life-support systems include such things as soil, forests, and freshwater systems. Genetic diversity means the range of genetic material now found in the world's living things; similarly, habitat diversity means the range of habitat now in existence in the Yukon.

**Decisions about the management of resources should reflect the need to integrate resource uses to the greatest extent possible.**

The Yukon Conservation Strategy must recognize and account for the fact that not all resource uses are compatible. It should,

however, be aimed at the integration of various uses of a resource or area to provide for greater overall benefit.

**Benefits from the development and conservation of resources are to meet the needs and values of the people of the Yukon.**

Yukoners want to receive a substantial share of the benefits that are to result from the conservation and development of our resources. Direct participation and control of conservation and development activities by Yukoners is a key to ensuring more benefits remain in the territory.

**The Yukon has a role to play in the national and international community to ensure species and ecosystems are sustained.**

Species and ecosystems are not all confined by the boundaries of the Yukon. The conservation strategy needs to acknowledge that there will be cases in which the priorities of Canada, the circumpolar region, or the world will take precedence in order to ensure that specific species and/or ecosystems can be sustained and properly managed.

**We in the Yukon each have a responsibility for the conservation of the territory's resources. We are the caretakers of these resources for ourselves and future generations.**

This principle recognizes the collective responsibility of all Yukoners for the resources of the territory. This responsibility extends beyond the present to future generations. Through this principle we acknowledge the saying, "We have not inherited this earth from our parents; we have borrowed it from our children."

# OBJECTIVES

## WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE FROM A CONSERVATION STRATEGY?

In developing a conservation strategy, Yukoners will be preparing a comprehensive plan for the management of natural resources. The strategy will thus provide a clear picture of how the resources of the Yukon will be used and managed. From this primary goal or objective of a conservation strategy, several other objectives have been identified.

- Sustainable yield for all renewable resources in the Yukon
- A range of opportunities for the use of renewable resources
- Use and management of the Yukon's resources in a manner that will reduce the "boom and bust" nature of the territory's economy
- Active and integrated management of resources
- Conservation and preservation of the Yukon's wilderness characteristics and heritage
- Equitable distribution to Yukoners of the benefits from resource use
- A range of choices for lifestyle
- Promote understanding of aboriginal management practices and knowledge
- Opportunities for human resource development and employment in careers compatible with conservation principles
- Greater local autonomy in decision-making related to all aspects of the conservation strategy
- Public involvement, acceptance, respect and understanding of the principles of conservation
- Appropriate legislative and institutional mechanisms for the conservation of resources

# SUGGESTED ACTIONS

## HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES?

The objectives that have been proposed for a Yukon Conservation Strategy raise the question of what needs to be done to achieve these objectives. To provide a basis for discussion, a series of actions has been suggested for each objective.

### Sustainable yield for all renewable resources

Sustainable yield means the amount of a resource that can be harvested and used year after year without causing a decline in that resource.

Some Suggested Actions:

- establish government policies for the use of all renewable resources
- develop a management plan for the integrated use of renewable resources
- improve methods to resolve conflicts over resource use
- integrate environmental assessment processes into one unified, comprehensive, and simplified process
- establish a resource technology centre to promote research and development of innovative technologies related to renewable resources
- educate resource users on all aspects of achieving a sustainable yield
- account for rare and endangered species in planning, resource policies, and environmental assessment

### A range of opportunities for the use of renewable resources

The Yukon possesses a diverse range of renewable resources; these can help provide the means for economic diversification.

Some Suggested Actions:

- provide a stable regulatory environment for renewable resource uses
- develop an integrated management plan for all renewable resources
- provide economic development incentives to promote certain renewable resource uses

### Use and management of the Yukon's resources in a manner that will reduce the "boom and bust" nature of the territory's economy

The "boom and bust" nature of the Yukon's economy has long been recognized. To address this problem, ways of promoting greater long term stability from our resource sector need to be identified and instituted.

Some Suggested Actions:

- provide a stable regulatory environment for industries based on non-renewable resources
- develop and improve methods of

determining the quantity and quality of non-renewable resources

- conduct and support research into more efficient recovery techniques
- support government/industry research into methods of reducing the environmental impacts of non-renewable resource extraction
- control the rate of development of infrastructure and other support services
- provide various incentives to promote stable, long term development projects based on non-renewable resources

## Active, integrated management of resources

The renewable and non-renewable resources can not be considered in isolation; each affects the other. Measures are therefore needed to integrate the management of these two sectors.

Some Suggested Actions:

- establish a management plan for the integration of renewable and non-renewable resource uses
- establish a mechanism to resolve conflicts between renewable and non-renewable resource uses
- institute an environmental assessment process for all resource developments

## Conservation and preservation of the Yukon's wilderness characteristics and heritage

The territory's natural and cultural heritage is important to Yukoners. Our diverse landscapes, wild rivers and unique environmental features require a systematic means of protection.

Some Suggested Actions:

- acknowledge and treat wilderness as a resource in its own right
- complete the territorial parks and outdoor recreation system to fully protect the most sensitive or unique natural areas
- find and implement methods to protect wildlife habitats outside of parks or fully protected areas
- ensure that development activities in these areas are done in a manner that minimizes the negative environmental effects

## Equitable distribution to Yukoners of benefits from resource use

The development and conservation of our resources should provide us with a fair share of the benefits derived from these activities.

Some Suggested Actions:

- establish environmental, social, and economic criteria for assessing development projects
- provide compensation programs for people who suffer a loss from development projects
- provide financial opportunities for Yukoners from development activities
- offer opportunities for increased local participation, for target groups if necessary
- establish financial and taxation schemes to enhance opportunities for local benefits

## A range of choices for lifestyle

Yukoners pride themselves on living in a region where residents still have a range of choices about the way in which they live their lives. The conservation strategy should help to ensure this range of choices is maintained.

SOME SUGGESTED ACTIONS:

- fight the anti-fur lobby that threatens the trappers' way of life
- ensure the continuation of traditional renewable resource based lifestyles
- provide programs and resources to pass on the skills of different lifestyles

## Promote understanding of aboriginal management practices and knowledge

Awareness and understanding of the differing cultural views about resources and their management can help contribute to greater understanding and improved management of resources.

Some Suggested Actions:

- improve the information available on aboriginal management practices and knowledge
- continue the documentation of the history of the Yukon Indian people
- provide access to information on aboriginal management practices and knowledge
- provide local interpretive assistance in management practices and in regulatory decisions

## Opportunities for human resource development and employment in careers compatible with conservation principles

The conservation strategy needs to recognize the need for education and training to promote jobs consistent with the integration of conservation and development concerns.

Some Suggested Actions:

- reform the regulatory environment to allow innovative opportunities/technologies to occur
- develop an educational environment that encourages development/testing of innovative opportunities
- provide funding for pilot projects
- reevaluate formal employment criteria to reduce barriers to employment
- encourage skills education and upgrading

## Greater local autonomy in decision-making related to all aspects of the conservation strategy

More local control of resources and resource issues will assist in the management, use and protection of those resources.

Some Suggested Actions:

- settle the Yukon Indian land claim
- transfer federal responsibilities in the Yukon to the Yukon government
- provide for management assessment and planning at the community level

## Public involvement, acceptance, respect and understanding of the principles of conservation

The sustainable development of our resources depends on public understanding, support, and participation.

Some Suggested Actions:

- educate the Yukon public on conservation principles
- incorporate conservation principles into the school curriculum
- encourage public/industry/government projects to demonstrate the sustainable use of resources and sustainable development
- provide stronger enforcement of existing legislation
- provide for information exchanges between communities
- promote the development of conservation strategies at the community level in the Yukon

## Appropriate legislative and institutional mechanisms for the conservation of resources

This final objective for the Yukon Conservation Strategy would see legislative and institutional changes made to help achieve the conservation of the territory's resources.

Some Suggested Actions:

- amend existing legislation, in consultation with the affected parties, to ensure equitable treatment for all resource users
- ensure that the various laws in place regarding resources and resource management allow for integrated management
- prepare forestry, wilderness, heritage, environmental protection and project assessment legislation in the Yukon
- establish policies and legislation to guide the resolution of conflicts over resources
- establish a method to ensure that clean-up costs from environmental emergencies are borne by the parties responsible
- provide for stronger enforcement of existing regulations
- integrate the management of land and water within one government agency
- establish a board to advise government on conservation and related issues

# BUILDING A YUKON CONSERVATION STRATEGY

## HOW DO WE PROCEED?

This discussion paper has been entitled ***Building a Conservation Strategy for the Yukon*** for a specific reason. It is an initial step in the development of a conservation strategy for the Yukon.

This paper has outlined the principles and objectives for a conservation strategy. It has also presented some suggested actions.

This paper has been released to the Yukon public to promote the discussion of these elements of the strategy. Your views will be a very important part of shaping the final conservation strategy.

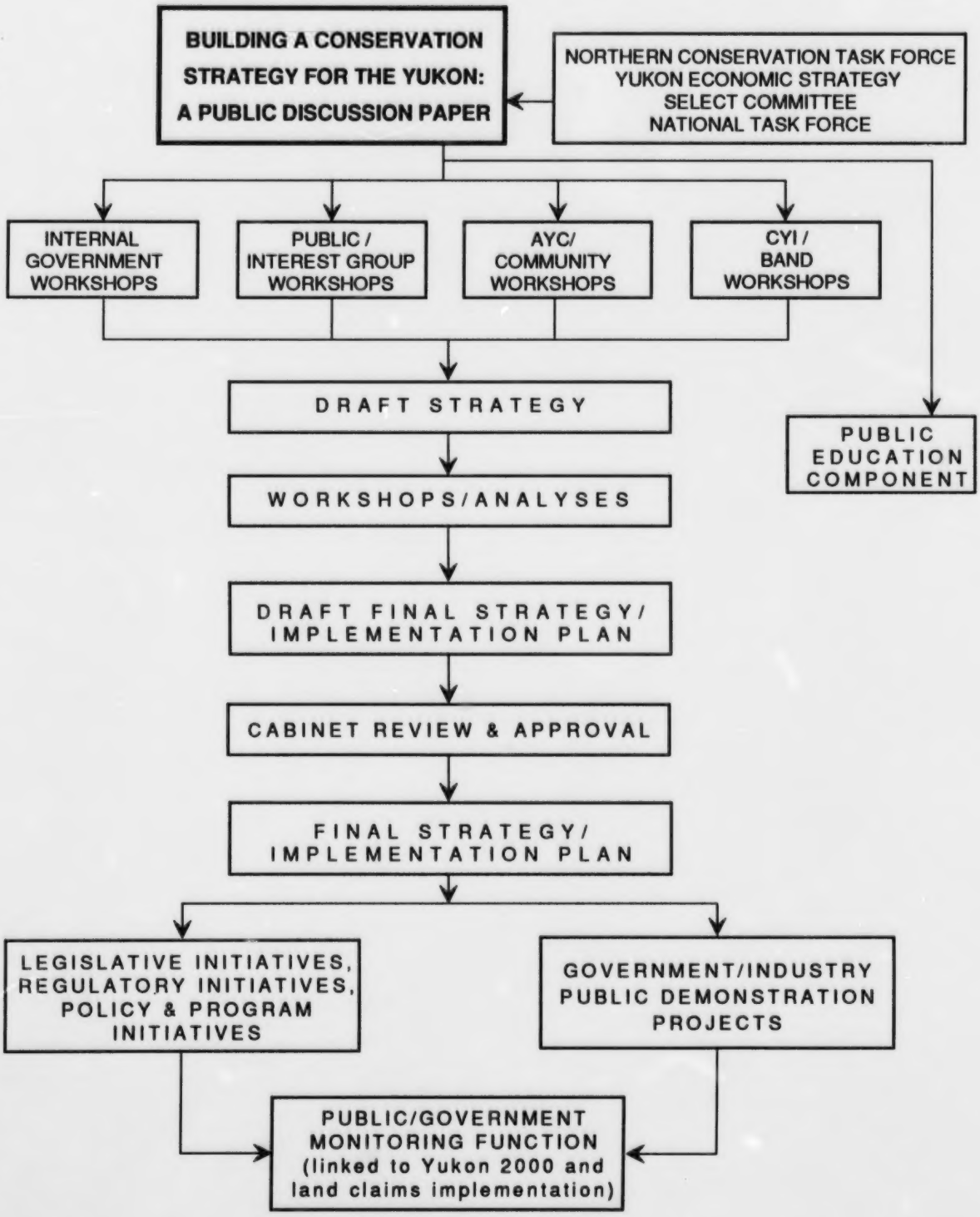
A series of workshops is planned to encourage your participation in developing the conservation strategy. These workshops will lead to the preparation of a draft and then a final strategy.

With the approval of a final conservation strategy by the Yukon Cabinet, work will proceed on its implementation. This transition from a plan for the management and conservation of the Yukon's natural resources to action will take two basic forms: legislative, regulatory, policy, and program initiatives that reflect the conservation strategy and demonstration projects.

Demonstration projects will provide concrete examples of sustainable use of our resources and the integration of conservation and development activities. Opportunities will be presented for projects to be developed by the public, industry, and government or for joint ventures between these groups.

These demonstration projects will make the strategy more than just words. They will move it towards becoming an active force in the everyday life of Yukoners.

An outline of the steps in the development and implementation of the conservation strategy is presented on the following page.


BUILDING A CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR THE YUKON: A PUBLIC DISCUSSION PAPER
NORTHERN CONSERVATION TASK FORCE
YUKON ECONOMIC STRATEGY
SELECT COMMITTEE
NATIONAL TASK FORCE
INTERNAL GOVERNMENT WORKSHOPS
PUBLIC / INTEREST GROUP WORKSHOPS
AYC/ COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS
CYI / BAND WORKSHOPS
DRAFT STRATEGY
PUBLIC EDUCATION COMPONENT
WORKSHOPS/ANALYSES
DRAFT FINAL STRATEGY/ IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
CABINET REVIEW & APPROVAL
FINAL STRATEGY/ IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES, REGULATORY INITIATIVES, POLICY & PROGRAM INITIATIVES
GOVERNMENT/INDUSTRY PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS
PUBLIC/GOVERNMENT MONITORING FUNCTION (linked to Yukon 2000 and land claims implementation)

**The success of a Yukon Conservation Strategy depends on broad public understanding and support. You are encouraged to express your views on this plan for the conservation and development of the territory's natural resources.**

Public workshops will provide an opportunity for your participation and involvement in the development of a conservation strategy. But there are other avenues open to you through the Public Working Group that has been involved in the preparation of this discussion paper and through the Department of Renewable Resources.

The Public Working Group consists of individual Yukoners and representatives of several Yukon organizations. The organizations that have been actively involved in this work are listed below:

Association of Yukon Communities
Council for Yukon Indians
Curragh Resources
Ducks Unlimited
Federation of Yukon Wilderness Outfitters
Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce
Yukon Conservation Society
Yukon Federation of Labour
Yukon Fish and Game Association
Yukon Historical and Museums Association
Yukon Outfitters Association
Yukon Science Institute
Yukon Trappers Association

If you are a member of any of these organizations, you can make your views known or get further information through your representative. Or, you can write or phone the Department of Renewable Resources.

Policy and Planning Branch
Department of Renewable Resources
Government of Yukon
P.O. Box 2703 Whitehorse, Yukon
667-5634; 1-800-661-0408 (toll-free)

# FOR MORE INFORMATION

Much has been written in recent years on sustainable development, conservation strategies and related issues, both in the Yukon and elsewhere.

A selected list of publications on these topics is provided below.

Canadian Society of Environmental Biologists. 1987. *Conservation Strategies in Canada*. Edmonton, Alberta, July 1987.

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For more information, please write or call:

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